

Hand & Wrist Surgery

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet will give you some guidelines to follow to speed your recovery. If you have any questions please ask your nurse or doctor.

When You Go Home

Activity:

Rest often when you return home. Keep your arm up at **all** times, for the first 48 hours to reduce swelling. When you are lying down, raise your arm on one or two pillows. Be sure to keep your wrist higher than your elbow.

If you are wearing a sling during the day, take it off every hour and gently exercise your shoulder and elbow joints. Exercise your fingers if directed by your doctor.

You may find that you will tire easily. Slowly increase your activity. Within about a week you should be able to return to most of your normal activities.

Driving:

You are advised not to drive for 48 hours after your surgery due to the anaesthetic. If your dressing is big or bulky, it may also limit your ability to drive. Avoid driving while taking pain medication.

Returning to Work or School:

Ask your doctor when you may return to work or school. This will depend on the type of work you do.

Taking Your Medications:

If a local freezing was used, you may have some pain when it wears off one to two hours after your surgery. This pain may last for a few days.

Be sure to fill your prescription for pain medication as soon as you can and take the pills as directed. Your pharmacist will tell you about your pills and how to take them.

Do not make any important personal or financial decisions when taking pain medication.

Caring for Your Dressing:

Do **not** remove your dressing unless directed by your doctor.

Your fingers should be warm and pink in colour and you should be able to wiggle your fingers. Some swelling is normal. Call your doctor if your fingers go numb, feel cold or turn blue. Remember to keep your arm up!

Nutrition:

Eat light meals and drink lots of fluids for the first few days after your surgery. Make sure your meals include protein, fruit, vegetables, bran, and milk products. Try to drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day. If you are feeling sick to your stomach, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.

Bathing:

You may bath or shower the day after your surgery but you must keep your dressing dry! Cover it with a plastic bag and tape it well before bathing or showering.

Follow-Up Visit:

Before going home, your doctor will let you know if there are any special instructions. Once you get home, phone your doctor's office to book a follow-up office visit.

See your doctor**Phone Your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department where you had your surgery if:**

- You have a lot of swelling and numbness in your hand.
- Your fingers turn blue and feel cold.
- You notice blood on your dressing.
- You have a fever or chills.
- The medication is not helping your pain.

You are a partner with us in planning your care. Ask questions, and be sure you are clear about how you will manage when you go home.

For general information or if you have any questions and you cannot contact your doctor, please phone:

**HEALTHLink Alberta
1-800-408-5465 (LINK)
Health advice 24 hours a day**